COVID-19 Update
March 6, 2020

According to the latest information provided by the US Centers for Disease Control (CDC), Maine still does not have any confirmed cases of the virus. However, we continue to monitor the situation closely and are in active communication with local and state health officials. We are reviewing our infectious disease protocols, taking appropriate steps for prevention, and working to have plans in place. This process includes reviewing the guidance provided to higher education by the American College Health Association, the CDC, the National Association of Student Personnel Administrators, the US State Department, and several other professional associations focused on international education.

At this time, the college is examining and evaluating staff, student, and faculty travel plans, especially COA-sponsored off-campus trips. In order to help us inform our response, we are asking people to voluntarily report all travel undertaken or planned for between Feb. 15 and June 10, 2020 (the end of spring term). Please use this link to share all your travel outside the state of Maine occurring during this time period. You can submit information using the link as many times as needed to inform us of your recent and future travel.

Regarding guidelines or recommendations for travel, we are deferring to the CDC's travel information and recommend that you do the same. As of now, the CDC recommends that travelers avoid all nonessential travel to China, Iran, South Korea, and Italy, and that older adults or those who have chronic medical conditions consider postponing travel to Japan. The World Health Organization has extensive recommendations regarding hygiene and infection control while traveling.

We are encouraging students who have travel planned as part of their academic program for spring to work with their advisors and project directors to create contingency plans, should the student or the college determine that the proposed travel is dangerous or ill-advised for any reason. Please reach out if you need help working on a back-up plan; we will work with you to ensure that proper accommodations are made.

In the coming days, the campus community will see signage consistent with the guidelines we shared last week about how to prevent the spread of infectious diseases, and what to do should one become sick. The college will be distributing supplies across campus to aid in disinfection of offices and campus vehicles, and will be increasing efforts by custodial staff to disinfect public high traffic areas. We will also be distributing hand sanitizer to aid in prevention, although guidance is still to focus on hand washing whenever possible.
Early next week the college will convene our emergency response team to continue the planning work already underway to ensure continuity of operations and the safety and health of our community in the event of a COVID-19 outbreak here on campus or nearby. The goal of the team will be to work with relevant staff and faculty to ensure that we are fully prepared to respond to impacts on the academic program, housing and dining services, health and mental health services, campus gatherings, and other services and activities of the college. This will include identifying how to address absences from work or class as a result of illness, and alternatives for community members at higher risk for severe cases of, or complications from, COVID-19. We have already begun to liaison with the Mount Desert Island COVID-19 Task Force, which includes emergency management officials from surrounding towns, Mount Desert Island Hospital, and others, to ensure that we are part of unified regional planning and response.

All community members should expect additional communications and requests for cooperation and collaboration as our response develops. Thank you in advance for your cooperation. As always, if you have questions about this or future communications, please be in touch with COA Dean of Student Life Sarah Luke.